

Friday, November 28, 2003
8 p.m. Victoria College Chapel

University of Toronto
Faculty of Music

Presents

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S CHORUS

Robert Cooper, conductor
Mia Bach, piano

PART ONE

Canadian Carols

What sweeter music

Where Did I Come From

Sing We Gloria (*Brenna Conrad, soloist*)

Eleanor Daley*

Robert Evans*

Malcolm Edwards*

A Ceremony of Carols

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Procession

Wolcum Yole!

There is no Rose

That Yonge Child (*Amy Zampiero, soloist*)

Balulalow (*Christine Lee, soloist*)

As Dew in Aprille

This Little Babe

Interlude

In Freezing Winter Night (*Joanna Leung, soloist*)

Spring Carol (*Christine Lee, Brenna Conrad, soloists*)

Deo Gracias

Recession

Cecile Denis, harp

INTERMISSION

PART TWO

Songs of the Nativity

Ruth Watson Henderson*

Chanticleer

Before the Paling of the Stars

The Kings of the East (*Ashleigh Semkiw, Amy Zampiero, soloists*)

The Lamb

Peace (*Brooke Richardson, Joanna Leung, Hsie-Mei Ko, Alicia Mighty, soloists*)

Christ is Here (*Ashleigh Semkiw, soloist*)

Continued...

Villancicos para una Noche de Cantar
(*Christmas Songs for a Night of Singing*)

Samuel Lancaster

Villancico Aragones
Villancico Murciano
Villancico Andaluz
Villancico Vasco
Villancico Catalan

I Sing Of A Maiden

Patrick Hadley

Still, Still Night (*Cecile Denis, harp; Raylin Barnsdale, soloist*)

Jackson Berkey

The Twelve Days After Christmas

Frederick Silver*

**Canadian Composers*

Program Notes

A Ceremony of Carols, Op. 28
BENJAMIN BRITTEN

In this moving work, Britten shows his amazing ability to achieve all sorts of musical effects with minimum means and great economy by writing for just treble voices. The texts come from medieval Christmas carols. The nine carols are preceded and followed by a processional and recessional.

1. "Procession." The choristers sing in unison and without accompaniment a setting of the traditional Latin hymn "Hodie Christus natus est."
2. "Wolcum Yole!" A joyous fifteenth-century carol sung, in the opening and closing sections, over a repeated, two-note ostinato figure in the harp.
3. "There is No Rose." A quiet fifteenth-century carol with origins in the Latin liturgy; these origins explain the mixture of English and Latin in the text.
4. "That Yonge Child." A melancholy melody sung by a solo voice to an anonymous text.
5. "Balulalow." A cradle song written by three Scottish brothers – James, John and Robert Wedderburn – around 1567. Britten accompanies the song by alternating major and minor chords.

6. "As Dew in Aprile." A gay, lively carol that is chordal in the opening and closing verses, with the three-part choir divided into two parts in the middle verses.

7. "This Little Babe." A poem by Robert Southwell is the text for this energetic, highly rhythmic carol, which continues its fast tempo even when the voice parts move more slowly near the end.

8. "Interlude." A section for harp alone that maintains the same ingenuous, light tone as the carols.

9. "In Freezing Winter Night." A setting of another poem by Robert Southwell in which the altos repeat an ostinato phrase under the two upper voices, helping Britten convey the icy cold of the scene.

10. "Spring Carol." With utter simplicity, Britten gives the words of William Cornish's poem to two solo voices.

11. "Deo Gracias." In this challenging carol – which compares Adam and Eve, who brought sin into the world, with Mary, through whom sin could be overcome – Britten effectively captures the exotic sound of medieval music.

12. "Recession." A literal repeat of the procession, sung as the choir files out.

A Ceremony of Carols received its first performance in Norwich, England, on

December 5, 1942. This year, 2003, marks the 90th anniversary of Benjamin Britten's birth.

Willancicos Para Una Noche De Cantar

SAMUEL LANCASTER

Several of my most treasured travel memories come from weeks I spent driving the roads of Spain in the days when the Guardia Civil kept watch with stern faces, and order with the machine guns strapped to their sides. But the memories I reassure are not of mystery and difficulty, but of street-level, in-the-air passion that more than once tripped this inhibited North American, skinning my knees and in certain moments, my heart: in Toledo, a little black-eyed boy who, honest to God, seemed to bounce 10 thousands of ecstatic believers carrying statues and torches; the echoing sound of hand clapping and foot stomping in an ordinary street in Seville, on an ordinary day, as a group of ordinary university students made their way to class. Like the brilliant whitewash of countless Spanish villages, these memories illuminated the rhythms, harmonies, and sounds of Spanish music that I'd long loved.

I began with some melodic fragments long loved from the work of Juaquin Nin (the brother of famous diarist, Anais Nin), and allowed the fragments to expand and flower in my imagination.

I love the whacky defiance of enthusiasm. These folk poems take the simple ("Joseph was a carpenter, and the Virgin a laundress") and, with their enthusiasm, elevate it to the sacred.

I have read that parents in Spain teach folk songs to their children for them to sing when they are afraid, alone or in the dark. And as the "Villancico Murciano" assures, "this night is Christmas Eve, a good night to sing." I hardly need amend that sentiment to say that any night, especially these troubled and uncertain nights is a good night to sing.

1. Villancico Aragonés

Listen to my verses because

I go with great happiness

To sing the praises of the sacred birth.

2. Villancico Murciano

This night is Christmas Eve,

a good night to sing

That is, the Virgin is pregnant,

And at midnight, she will give birth.

Glory to the Virgin, most holy

That this night will give birth, AY!

Glory to the Father; Glory to the Son.

This night is Christmas Eve,

A good night to sing.

3. Villancico Andaluz

Bell upon bell upon bell;

Lean out of this window

And see a child in a manger:

Bells of Bethlehem

That the angels are ringing.

What news are you bringing to me?

Gathering your flock,

Where are you going shepherd?

I am going to the manger; and

I'm bringing ricotta cheese and wine.

Bells of Bethlehem,

What news are you bringing me?

Bells upon bell upon bell,

Lean out of this window

Because God is born.

Walking at midnight where are you

Going, my good shepherd?

*I bring my heart to the child that is born, and
is God.*

Bells of Bethlehem

That the angels are ringing

What news are you bringing me?

4. Villancico Vasco

Come at last into our house,

Where we have chestnuts

to celebrate Christmas.

From your father and your mother,

who are so thrilled,

*You will feel a flame that will burn your heart
and your soul.*

5. Villancico Catalán

What will we give

to the son of the Virgin?

What shall we give him

that tastes good?

We'll give him raisins on a tray,

We'll give him figs on a plate.

What will we give
to the little son of Mary?
What will we give to the beautiful baby?
Raisins and figs and nuts and olives.
Raisins and figs and honey and curds.

*Tam patantam, that the figs are green,
Tam patantam, they'll get ripe
If they are not ripe by Easter,
They will be ripe by Palm Sunday.*

Notes by composer Samuel Lancaster

Songs of the Nativity

Toronto's Ruth Watson Henderson (b.1932) wrote *Songs of the Nativity* in 1984 for the Oriana Singers. It is a suite of six songs on Christmas themes, to lyrics by six different poets.

Chanticleer, with its recurring fanfare motifs, is from a poem by William Austin (1778-1841) dealing with a legend alluded to by Shakespeare:

Some say that ever 'gainst that season
comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
The bird of dawning singeth all night
long...

Before the paling of he stars sets the words of the English mystical poet Christina Georgina Rossetti (1830-1894). The *Kings of the East* is by Katharine Lee Bates (1859-1929), best known as the author of *America the Beautiful*. This setting moves from processional majesty, through wonder, to a seraphic ending. The tranquil mood thus established continues in the unaccompanied *The Lamb*, from *Songs of Innocence* by William Blake (1757-1827), and in the tender setting of *Peace*, one of the many poems which Annie Aitken Zeidman (1896-1992) wrote for the annual calendars issued by the Scott Mission in Toronto during her long association with that organization. *Christ is Here*, by New Englander Robert Lowell (1917-1977), brings the set to a jubilant conclusion.

Biography

One of Canada's leading choral conductors, **Robert Cooper** began his career under the tutelage of Helmuth Rilling and Robert Shaw. He is currently the Artistic Director of the *Orpheus Choir of Toronto*, *Chorus Niagara*, the *Opera in Concert Chorus*, and is a teaching member of the Choral Department, Faculty of Music, University of Toronto. As a superb choral trainer and conductor, Mr Cooper also provided strong artistic leadership to the *Toronto Mendelssohn Youth Choir* for 22 successful years, influencing over 2000 young adult singers. Many of those singers have gone on to solo careers, while others are adding their own voices to various choirs across Canada.

He enjoys a distinguished career as a guest conductor and clinician working with many of Canada's leading choral organizations and provincial choral federations. He has had the honour of conducting the *National Youth Choir* of Canada and made his Carnegie Hall debut in 1997 for a Celebration of Canadian Choral Music. He recently conducted concerts with Symphony Nova Scotia and the London

Symphony, as well as conducting Newfoundland's *Festival 500* and productions for Toronto Operetta Theatre. In addition to his work with choirs, Robert Cooper has been involved with the presentation of more than 80 operas and has been a frequent guest conductor with opera companies across Canada. This October Mr. Cooper adjudicated the international choral competition *Let the People Sing* in London, England. He has also recorded CD's of both opera and choral music and provided choral backup for films and Stratford Festival productions.

Robert Cooper has served as President of both the Ontario Choral Federation and the Association of Canadian Choral Conductors and is on the Board of Directors of Chorus America. To complete the circle, Mr. Cooper brings fine choral music to all of Canada as Executive Producer, Opera and Choral Music, for CBC Radio Two.

In June 2003 Robert Cooper received an Honorary Doctorate degree from Brock University for his significant contribution to the Canadian choral community.

UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S CHORUS

Robert Cooper, *Conductor*

SOPRANO 1

Lauren Bird
Brenna Conrad
Laura Klassen
Hsien-Mei Ko
Christine Lee
Joanna Leung
Alicia Mighty
Sarah Pomper
Brooke Richardson
Ashleigh Semkiw
Christine Suh
Tamara Vaughan
Marisa Walker
Amy Zampiero

SOPRANO 2

Raylin Barnsdale
Julia Bentley
Eva Branda
Maggie Chan
Julia Freedman
Roseanne Greco
Maegan Heller
Heather Kentner
Laura Kim
Dorcas Ko
Kay Kong
Susan Lam
Natalie Mak
Jennifer Matys
Myrtle Millares
Megan Prashad
Hallie Reynolds
Anne Wong

ALTO 1

Stefanie Baldassarra
Leanne Bell
Megan Chang
Vivian Chiang
Angel Chen
Larissa Doherty
Julia Forgie
Grace (Eunhae) Ha
Vavareh Hakoub
Gourjianrad
Diana (Hye-Young) Kim
Minhyung Linda Kim
Andrea Nagy
Shannon Ng
Andreea Olariu
Jade Wan
Charrisa West
Christal Wu
Kyongseun Yuh

ALTO 2

Rebecca Banman
Maria Christina Chern
Andrea Czarnecki
Veronika Davy
Glenda delmonte escalante
Melissa Janke
Tanya Krosel
Allison Law
Léah Lazonick
Candice Leung
Michelle Ma
Laura Middleton
Ann Pornel
Laura Sweetman
Amy Valyear
Deyi Ye
Yauheniya Yesmanovich

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